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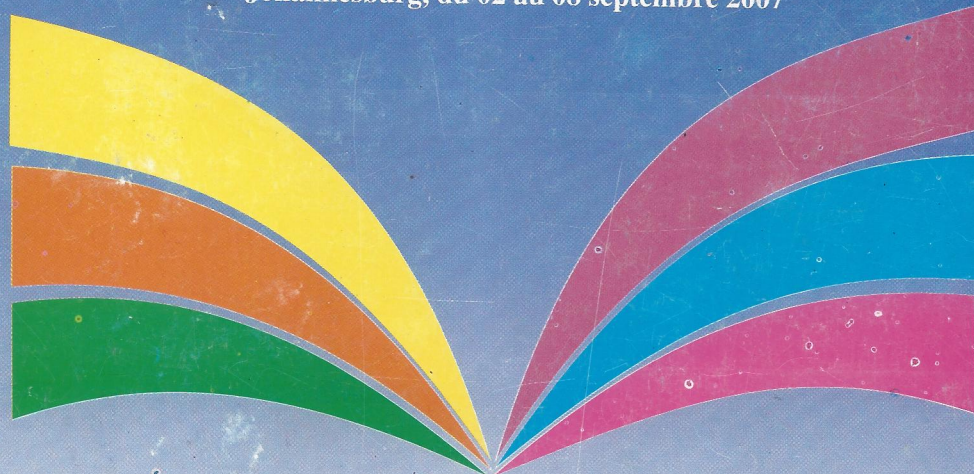
# Pauvreté et richesses dans la Bible

# Poverty and Riches in the Bible

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## LUKE 14:15-24 AS A PARABLE FOR AFRICA

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### 0. Introduction

A question that is most often asked in Africa is: Does God design poverty and suffering for some people and prosperity for others? The parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:15-24 describes a society that is stratified into the rich and the poor. The rich, as vv18-19 shows, are large scale farmers and estate buyers who live in private estates, own vineyards, have slaves at their service and relate with people of equal social status. A quite different picture is painted with the list of people mentioned in v21. It includes the poor (πτωχός), maimed (ἀναπίερος), blind (τυφλός) and lame (χωλός) who depend on others for survival. Luke's depiction of the human society in this text is true of the biblical witness. The Bible presents a world that is made up of bi-polar realities: good and evil, great and small, righteous and wicked, free and slave, rich and poor, etc. Sometimes, these realities appear as contrasts by which human beings are defined in their moral and social status. In certain biblical texts, the categories of rich and poor are used to characterize the entire humanity (Ps 49:2; Prov 22:2). Jer 5:4 speaks of the entire nation of God's people as consisting of the rich as well as the poor. The Bible gives various reasons for the existence of these imbalances in creation. They exist either as a matter of fact or are caused by the socio-economic situation of the people. The biblical writers were aware of the way in which the relationship between the rich and the poor affects human society. Luke 14:15-24 is one of the numerous biblical passages that propose this story as a model of human relationship that brings blessing to the human community.

Luke 14:15-24 has parallels in Matt 22:1-4 and in Logion 64 of the Gospel of Thomas.<sup>1</sup> Most studies on this passage investigate how the Lukan version differs from the others and what it contributes to his unique theology.<sup>2</sup> Details of their relationship cannot be treated here, but during the course of interpretation, a comparison with Matthew's version will be made in order to underline the unique theology of the Lukan version.

<sup>1</sup> A.J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 333.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Rev. ed. 1961) 93; J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (2d rev. ed., New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972) 63; A.J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 552-53.

The paper gives more attention to the setting and literary characteristics of the Lukan story (vocabulary and terminologies) and how they bring out the message of the text. After a study of the text according to these exegetical considerations, the African situation is discussed alongside a review of the place of the poor in Luke and the Bible.

### 1. The Setting of Luke's Story

Luke 14:15-24 belongs to a larger narrative unit (Luke 14:1-24) found in the fourth part of the Gospel (Luke 9:51-19:48), which is called the Journey Narrative. Luke 14:1 marks the beginning of a new scene because its opening phrase (*On one occasion ...*) locates Jesus in a place and with an audience that is different from the immediately previous section. The unit ends at 14:24 since v25 continues Jesus' journey with a different audience. In 14:1-24, therefore, Jesus is in the home of a leading Pharisee having been invited to a meal on a Sabbath.

Understanding the setting of this parable in Luke 14 and how he differs from Matthew is important for the significance Luke attaches to it in his gospel.<sup>3</sup> Different from the polemical and eschatological context of the Matthean version of the parable (Matt 21:23,45,46; 22:15), Luke, instead, makes Jesus tell this parable within the Travel Narrative (19:51-19:27) while he was one of the invited guests in the house of a leader of the Pharisees. The absence of the disciples (apostles) of Jesus in this scene is striking, as this underscores that the parable is a teaching to the human community. In the story, Jesus' audience is the Pharisees, the lawyers (14:3) and probably people of honour, leaders of the people in different respects whose duty it is to oversee the wellbeing of people in the community. The air of polemics is basically absent and the teaching of Jesus here should be understood to be basically pedagogical. This opinion may contradict the thesis of Cadoux and Jeremias, who hold that all Gospel parables are weapons of controversy addressed to critics.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus teaching in Luke 14:1-24 has four aspects that are distinguished by the subject matter of his discourses: He talks to Pharisees and lawyers over the matter of healing on a Sabbath (vv1-6); he addresses the issue of social dynamics in the guest / host relationship (vv7-14); he emphasizes the humanitarian concern for the poor in social relationships (vv12-14) and he tells the Parable of the Great Banquet as a response to a pious remark by a fellow guest (vv15-24). Though these four discourses have different subject matters, they do not segment the literary unit,

<sup>3</sup> S.J. Kistemaker, *The Parables: Understanding the Stories Jesus Told* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002) 164.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A.T. Cadoux, *The Parables of Jesus: Their Art and Use* (New York: Macmillan, 1931) 13; J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 145.

since they are held together by time, same audience, same locality, and similar vocabulary.<sup>5</sup> Of the four discourses, the language of invitation to a meal, and the vocabulary of 'blessing' and 'the poor' hold vv12-14 and vv15-24 together. In fact, the parable in 14:15-24 adds further emphasis to Jesus' advice to his host in vv12-14. Therefore, the parable is intended to be a teaching on social relationship within the human community. It is a corrective to a social convention that divides society into the rich and the poor. With the parable, Jesus proposes a kind of social relationship that brings blessing to individuals in the human community (cf. Luke 14:14).

Having established the setting of the story, further interpretation of the parable is made in the next paragraph with the exposition of its literary characteristics.

## 2. Literary Considerations

This section studies some relevant vocabulary and terminology of the text. The parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:15-24 is classified as an allegorical parable, meaning that it contains metaphors with extended meaning and each of its details need to be interpreted.<sup>6</sup>

In relation to the parallel stories in Matthew and Thomas, Luke's unique theology shines out in the terminology he employs in the story. Firstly, the parable concerns a certain man whose personality hides behind the typically Lukan expression ἄνθρωπός τις, variously translated in different versions of the Bible as 'a man' (RSV, NEB, NAB), 'a certain man' (KJV, NIV), or 'someone' (NRSV). Except for two cases (Luke 14:2 and Acts 9:33), Luke normally uses this vocabulary to introduce Jesus' parables.<sup>7</sup> The character of the host, therefore, has far reaching implications for the interpretation of the story. Since the parable is not about invitations to a royal wedding, as Matthew presents it, this may imply that the Lukan parable speaks of a typically human attitude in social relationships. In Luke, the note of judgment (Matt 22:7,13) is only implicit in the host's anger (v21). For this reason, it could be argued that v24 belongs to the earlier context from which Luke takes the parable, that is, the common source he shares with Matthew. The excuses of the invited guests (vv18-20) affect a new course of action in the host, a radical discontinuity that brings blessing.

Secondly, the Greek term δεῖπνον, translated as 'banquet' or 'Great dinner', underscores its nature as meant for people of a high social status. A banquet is different from the dinner to which Jesus was invited, a party of a few that is held in a

<sup>5</sup> E. Bammel, πτωχός in *TDNT* VI (1968), 888.

<sup>6</sup> A.J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 12-13, 331.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Luke 10:30; 12:16; 15:11; 16:1,19; 19:12; 20:9.

dinner room. It is the party of the big hall; the heart of the house, and it is truly a banquet when the house of the host is full with different classes and categories of people of worth.

Closely related to δειπνον is another term γεμισθῆ, aorist passive form of the verb γεμίζω found in v23. This rare verb is found especially in Luke and Revelation, and it simply means 'to be filled with something'. The verb has neither a significant theological trajectory nor lexical importance in the New Testament, which can influence the reading of the parable. Nevertheless, the present interpretation accords important consideration to it because it offers the justification for the disappointment and frustration of the host (vv21-24). The host had acted according to the social convention of his context. He invited many of his friends, relations and rich neighbours (cf. v12) but these could not honour the invitation. The emptiness of the banquet hall led him to experience shame, and the very reason for further invitations after experiencing disappointment from the first invitees is ...*so that my house may be filled* (v23). In other words, the house must be filled in order for the party to be truly banquet.

After the disappointment experienced with the first invitation, the host attempted to fill his house through a second and third invitations (vv21-23). Those invited at these second and third times are two classes of people who were usually not invited to a banquet. The one group is the poor and physically challenged persons (v21), and the other comprises the homeless who find shelter along main roads and outside the city (v23). Why were these people invited as an afterthought? The succeeding paragraphs expose the vocabulary that defines two groups of people, who were brought to the banquet after the host had experienced disappointment with the first invitations. Who they are is important for understanding how a relationship with them could attract God's blessing and reward.

The second group of invitees are designated as the πτωχός. The Greek word πτωχός, whose Hebrew equivalent is עני and its synonyms (לַדִּי and אֲבִיּוֹן), primarily expresses a relation of dependence or inferiority rather than a state of social distress. This meaning is highlighted by its antonym עשיר (or פָּרִיז and עוֹשֵׁק), which means 'violent'. Basically therefore, πτωχός refers to 'one who is wrongfully impoverished or dispossessed' by the more powerful.<sup>8</sup> When it is used to denote an economic position, it means 'poor', 'humiliated', 'beggar', or 'socially inferior'. It is clearly a term which describes a relationship, and it is striking that its contrast is not 'the wealthy person' (πλουτός) but 'the violent person'. One may conclude on the basis of this meaning that most references to 'the rich' in Luke's theology concerns a class of people, the beneficiaries of the curses in Luke 6:24-26, whose

<sup>8</sup> E. Bammel, πτωχός, 888.

wealth is fruit of violence, oppression and injustice against the weak and vulnerable. The other people in the list of v21 (// v13), the maimed, blind and lame, are physically challenged people who are dependent on others or the human society for survival. The mention of this class of people may probably take minds to Is 35:5-6 and 61:1, texts which also mention the blind, the deaf, the lame and the dumb and the preaching of good news to the oppressed poor. They could be classified with the poor as beggars and socially inferior. Together with the poor, they are located along the city streets (πλατεῖαι) and the alleys (δύμαι) – v21. The reason for this special concern for them could be found within the special place that the poor occupies in Luke's Gospel. The theme of the rich and the poor pervade the Gospel of Luke. It is found at the beginning of the Gospel in the Magnificat (1:52-53), to preach the Good News to the poor is the major program of Jesus' ministry (4:18), the Sermon on the Plain begins with a blessing for the poor (6:20).

Since the banquet hall was still not full after the second invitations, there was need to bring in more people. The third group are not objects of any invitation; rather, the host asked his servants to fetch them or to 'compel' them to come. They comprise those who live along main roads outside the city (ὁδοί) and hedges that enclose yards and fields (φραγμοί) – v23, places where the homeless could seek shelter. The words used here are not neutral descriptions, but they indicate that poverty is reality that impinges on people's lives and prevents them from participating fully in the human community. These words indicate circumstances which, according to this parable, calls for change. This class of people represent those who are forced out of residential areas and are, therefore, not usually invited to meals. Shabbiness, helplessness and anxiousness characterize them. In relation to the Matthean parallel, it is interesting to note that when the first invitees rejected the invitation, Matthew makes the royal host invite "whomever they found, both bad and good" (Matt 22:10). Luke does not specify the identity of this group. The fact that they are 'compelled' to come to the banquet suggests that they are more destitute than the second group. They are a homeless people whom nobody would want to invite, and with that sense of non-belonging, they would not even dare to attend such parties when and if invited. Therefore, the host commands his servants to compel them.

This parable may well qualify as a wisdom story because with it Jesus teaches what one should do in order to forestall disappointments in relationship such as that of the host. However, the vocabulary used here to designate the poor shows that they are products of a society with oppressive structures. The poor are sign of a society that needs restoration in its relationships. Having identified their place in the human society, it is important to ask how the vocabulary of the poor connects with the macarism that occasioned the parable (v15).

A particular feature of New Testament macarisms resides in its being connected especially to the poor. In both Matthew and Luke, the first blessedness is addressed to the poor (Matt 5:3; Luke 6:20). In these two Gospels, Jesus proves his identity as Messiah from the evidence of how the good news affects and reverses the condition of the poor, the sick and those in every kind of need.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, in the Synoptic Gospels, care of the poor is given as a *conditio sine qua non* for blessedness and the inheritance of the Kingdom.<sup>10</sup> This means that what Jesus says here is normative and valid in itself. It is the one way to the inheritance of God's blessing.

The foregoing discussion has been able to highlight some interesting aspects of the Lukan story. This language of blessing for a humanitarian regard for the poor implies that the action of the parable is not to be related to some remote or even near eschatological future but to the present of Jesus' and Church's ministry.<sup>11</sup> It is, therefore, relevant to contemporary society. The parable is not a parable of judgement but a parable on social relationships. It is a teaching addressed to the human community on the need to prevent oppressive relationships that engender poverty, destitution, and which exclude some other persons from participating in the life of the human community. The parable underlines how socio-economic relation in the human community is central to faith in God and the inheritance of blessing. The present interpretation considers this parable as suited for Africa. The next paragraph is a re-reading of the parable in the African context.

### 3. Luke 14:15-24: A Parable for Africa

Africa is considered and is in fact one of the richest but most exploited continents in the world. It is a continent in which the inequities of this world incarnate in the most radical way. Many African societies are filled with dramatic imbalances for reasons that will be exposed in the course of this essay. They know the divide between the rich and the poor, between the powerful and their victims and between the fortunate and the less fortunate. Poverty is one issue that has made Africa the most humiliated continent in the world, with the result that the name 'Africa' is synonymous with poverty and suffering. The scourge is all over the continent and despite the awareness of its presence it continues to feed deeper on the flesh of the continent. Faced with the most obvious reality that in most African countries many suffer deprivation in the midst of plenty, one is constrained to look at the present theme from the viewpoint of the failure of the human responsibility on the African soil.

<sup>9</sup> Matt 11:4-6; Luke 4:18-19; 6:17-19; 7:23.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Matt 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 14:13,21; 18:22; 19:18.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (WBC, Dallas: Word Books, 1993) 755.

Most interpretations of Luke, and of this parable of the Great Banquet, give particular attention to the socio-economic relations that underlie Luke's gospel. The importance of socio-economic relations for understanding the dynamics of human relationships in this parable cannot be underestimated. We may not totally describe the effect of socio-economic and political situation of Luke's world and how it is the root cause of poverty, nevertheless, it is important to consider contemporary African countries and the instability that characterize them to understand the parable. However, the socio-economic situation, which Luke describes, has its roots from ancient biblical times. The African situation is viewed against the background of the biblical witness.

The land which Yahweh gave to his people was 'a land flowing with milk and honey' (Num 13:27), a land which would not necessarily allow the existence of a poor person (Deut 8:9; 15:4). During the period of Tribal Confederacy, there was no sharp or rigid distinction between the rich and the poor, especially because every one had access to the means of production (Josh 13:7-14). However, with the inception of the monarchy, Israel adopted the socio-political system of other ancient peoples, who lived in city-states and had established social differences. It was a socio-political system of government that created social distinctions among the people and encouraged the wealthy and more powerful to exploit and oppress their fellows, reducing them to situations of dependency and want. The first prophetic exposition of the far-reaching implication of the evils of the socio-political system of the monarchy is found in 1 Sam 8:10-18.

Divine response to the cause of the poor is addressed to the community that produced poverty in its socio-economic relations. Many biblical texts state that poor people exist because rich people take advantage of their political and economic power to usurp wealth belonging to the poor,<sup>12</sup> the rich persecute, oppress and despoil the poor,<sup>13</sup> the rich pervert justice to the disadvantage of the poor and rub them of their rights.<sup>14</sup> The picture that is painted is a world divided into the violent oppressors and their victims. The Law, the Prophets and the Israelite Sages criticized this system, castigated the rich and the violent, and proposed a system of socio-economic relations that could reduce if not eradicate poverty from the midst of God's people. The Torah legislates on social realities that attack poverty at its roots. These laws forbid the amassing of possessions (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21), partiality in judgment (Exod 23:3,6; Lev 19:15), taking of interest on a loan (Exod 22:25) and withholding of wages or articles of pledge (Exod 23:6; Deut 24:12,14-

<sup>12</sup> Job 20:10,19; 24:2-4.

<sup>13</sup> Job 24:2-12; Ps 102,8-10; 12:5; 37:14; 109:16; Prov 13:23; 30:14; Is 3:14-15; 32:7; Jer 2:34; Ezek 18:12,17; 22:29.

<sup>14</sup> Is 10:2



- A very high percentage of adult illiteracy and low ratio of school enrolment into the faculties of science and technology, courses necessary for the technological advancement and national development.
- Lowest income level of the citizens and unemployment.

Considering that Africa has numerous potentials for wealth and wellbeing, the poverty of its people is directly connected with the structures within which the Africans live. No one would doubt that African countries have enough material and human resources that would instil sanity in the population but as long as many African societies remain infantile, barbaric and selfish, poverty would become a reality that has come to stay. Is it not a shame that while the poverty rate reduced drastically in the rest of the world, especially between the years 1975 and 2000, Africa's poor increased. The case of Nigeria is paradigmatic of other African nations. Nigeria still falls within the calamity that encircles the entire sub-Saharan Africa. In spite of its wealth, it has over the years ironically come to occupy a permanent seat in the league of the world's poorest nations. Nigeria is not only endowed with material and human resources, but in addition, her climatic condition favours steady growth and development. Despite all these, years of visionless, rudderless and kleptocratic leadership have kept her steady on the backward course in the path of growth and development. Many other African countries have suffered many years of political instability and bad governance, which lead to a chaotic economic and unbearable social situation for the people. In these countries, about more than 20% of the national income per annum disappear into private coffers, about 80% of the population has no productive means to satisfy its needs, a third of the population live in tents without hygienic services and good water. For these reasons, frequent cholera epidemic and other otherwise curable diseases have led to very high mortality rate. This situation can only be described as 'critical'.

A recent statement of Benedict XVI is pertinent at this point. Speaking to 350 experts invited to the Vatican to discuss "The Growing Role of Emerging Countries in Global Competition: Economic, Social and Cultural Consequences" the Pope cited a section of John Paul II's encyclical "Centesimus Annus," saying:

Development must not be understood solely in economic terms, but in a way that is fully human...It is not only a question of raising all peoples to the level currently enjoyed by the richest countries, but rather of building up a more decent life through united labor, of concretely enhancing every individual's dignity and creativity, as well as his capacity to respond to his personal vocation, and thus to God's call...Attention to the real needs of the human being, respect for the dignity of every person,

a sincere search for the common good are inspired principles that are good to keep in mind when planning a nation's development.<sup>18</sup>

This statement introduces the crucial implication of the foregoing discussion on the scourge of poverty in Africa. The problem of poverty is the responsibility of the society that engenders poverty in the people. The only way out of the ugly situation is the establishment of policies that restore the poor to their god-given patrimony.

The parabolic affirmation of Luke (14:23) in the first century A.D. with regard to the importance of the poor for the fullness of the human family is being emphasized today in new ways. The International community is concerned with the African predicament because of the increasing awareness that the peace and well-being of the global human community is realised only through a large-scale commitment to the sustainable development of all nations, especially through the eradication of poverty. The UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon said to the UN Press office: "the millennium goals belong to all, ... we need to feel ourselves a part of this project. During the next seven and a half years, each day will be a new day in which we can help millions of people in the world".<sup>19</sup> Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, in her reply to a personal letter to her by Benedict XVI, also articulates a similar remark, "We want to use the German G8 and EU Presidencies to push ahead with combating poverty and realizing the Millennium Development Goals. We are focusing here particularly on the potentials of development in the African continent and the challenges facing it."<sup>20</sup>

It is necessary to add that while international communities and organizations are at least discussing the African predicament, the African population suffers bitter delusion because of the lack of interest demonstrated by its leaders. The efforts of the global community will be but a drop in the ocean if the political and economic situations of African states are not improved in the long term. More than ordinary generosity is required to remedy the African situation; she needs to be restored in her socio-economic and political spheres.

#### 4. Conclusion

The idea that has dominated the present interpretation of Luke 14:15-24 is the dynamics of the socio-economic relationship that engender poverty and exclude some people from the life of the human community. This idea concerns precisely the way in which state institutions allow the powerful violent persons to engender

<sup>18</sup> "Globalization Needs Solidarity", *Zenith News*, May 21, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. "Summit on Millennium Goals Called", *Zenith News*, August 17, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Letter written on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 2007; cf. *Zenith org.* ZEO 4071703.

poverty in the powerless members of the society. The presence of the poor and the socially excluded in any society is sign of a human community that needs restoration in its relationships and structures. The parable proposes that a due consideration of the interest of the poor in any interpersonal and social relationship attracts blessing both for the person and for the society. In consideration of this great teaching, I will propose various ways in which human communities could work towards this project of restoration through a primary interest for the poor. My proposal is directed especially to ecclesial institutions. It concerns what ecclesial institutions could do to make Jesus' words relevant to contemporary Africa.

#### **4.1. A Prophetic and Royal Church**

Texts like Isa 11:3-4 and Jer 22:15-16 show that it was the prophets who were the principal spokespersons of authentic royal governance and they came into direct conflict with the established ways of doing things. With impressive force and vivid imagery, they express their fury against what the rich and powerful do to others.<sup>21</sup> In keeping with this prophetic spirit, national conferences of Catholic Bishops in Africa write communiqués where they address the imperialistic excesses of governments and their death-oriented policies. Practically, their words seem to fall on deaf ears because the African leaders continue with their selfish agenda. Catholics and their parish leaders read these communiqués and in different circles, "what the government is doing to us" end up as table or recreation talk. Actually, the prophetic mission of the Church should be played out in a more efficient context. The parish is the Church that lives closest to people who suffer oppression, deprivation and exclusion. However, the experience is that our parish communities do not share the hurts and pain of these individuals in their tragedies. These people are, therefore, disconnected with the Church's preaching because it does not address their situation. Orphans and widows experience the seizure of their property, many suffer in the hands of corrupt judges, and in many contemporary circles the story of Naboth is replayed in varied dramatic ways. The cries of these individuals remain behind the closed doors of private discussion and the leader of the community of faith raises a voice neither in the public square nor on the pulpit. Consequently, the Church exists as superficial and inauthentic among a people filled with hurts and pain.

#### **4.2. A Church that witnesses to an appropriate use of power**

As the host of the Lukan parable, the Church has reached the point where it has to assess her power structures. The Church should build up power structures in its institutions, which are not detrimental but which clearly express God's action

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Hos 12:8; Amos 8:5; Jer 22:13-17; Mic 2:1-3.

and serve God's purpose for his people. According to T. Okere, "the structure of governance, because of its position in affecting every aspect of life and being of a people, must become the dominant issue in any society including the Christian Church".<sup>22</sup> Jesus is the unique bearer of God's saving power and he demonstrated this power in his teaching, healing, and manifested it particularly as the power to give and enhance life. Similarly, "God's authority is represented on earth through the Church. So through her social organization and leadership, the Church bears witness that a redemptive use of power is possible within the human community".<sup>23</sup> Another important source for the character of Christian leadership is Mk 10:42-45. According to the context of this text, Jesus explains that among the Gentiles rulers make their authority felt and he commands that this must never be so among his followers, saying: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant...". In these few lines, he moves his disciples from reflection on power and authority to reflection on service and suffering for the other. Probably, Church leaders lack the courage to censure governments and persons who use power at the detriment of powerless individuals because they too fail to embrace this spirituality of leadership. Service to the poor implies standing with and for them in all circumstances.

#### 4.3. A Church for the Poor

Another area of self-assessment concerns the Church's relationship to the poor. We may infer from the prophetic critique of the powerful rich that the prophets must have lived very close to the poor to understand their predicament. Could we say the same of our parish priests and Church leaders of various capacities? The Lukan parable proposes an alternative behaviour to societal relations (cf. vv12-14). Under normal circumstances, relationships among people are based on a model of reciprocity. In the alternative society instead, one inherits eternal blessing if he / she invites those who cannot return favours generously given, like the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. This implies that social relationships within the ecclesial community should have a character that befits members of the Kingdom of God.

The Church's responsibility towards the poor on the African soil must derive from Luke's portrait of Jesus. In Luke, Jesus was always in the company of people, especially the poor and those with various kinds of need. Therefore, discipleship in

<sup>22</sup> T. Okere, "Church Organization as the Root Cause of Anti-Clericalism" in I. Obinwa, *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation. Proceedings of the Conference of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN) 2005* (Onitsha: Africana First Publishers, 2006) 104.

<sup>23</sup> M.-S. Nwachukwu, "Biblical Framework for the Spirituality of Collaborative Ministry" in I. Obinwa, *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation. Proceedings of the Conference of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN) 2005* (Onitsha: Africana First Publishers, 2006) 66.

have access to the services because they cannot pay for them. This is an important area of self-assessment. For other areas where there are no schools, no hospitals or even primary health centres, the Church in that locality should stand on the toes of the government (or any charity organization) until it provides those services.

Thirdly, most ecclesiastical projects are usually the building of gigantic Churches, pastoral centres or other money yielding projects that serve the needs of the privileged class. The Church can also think of how best to help the people to put agricultural products to good use. Rural Africans are known for farming prowess, and due to our culture of waste and lack of means of preservation, most of these products are not preserved for long-term use. A parish can begin miniature agricultural projects for the community. For instance, it can think of Cassava, Rice, Palm Oil mills, depending on the main product of the area in question. The Church can also use its influence to get fertilizers from the government to help local people improve on their farming. Some parishes in Nigeria have Skills Acquisition Centres where young people learn different trades or are helped to improve their talents. Such projects should be supported and encouraged.

I will conclude this long essay with three important sentences that had featured in the body of this paper. Authentic leadership begins with the willingness to associate with the poor and the outcasts. If the gospel is to be the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the ecclesial community must bring relief and freedom to the poor. And lastly, more than ordinary generosity is required to remedy the African situation; she needs to be restored in her socio-economic and political spheres.